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RUINS OF BANNOW.

The following description of the ancient town of Bannow, in the county of Wexford, a short notice of which was in our last number, is from the pen of the Rev. Robert Walsh, and will be found interesting, as being more ample in its details than the communication of M. O'R. Mr. Walsh states, that, in the summer of 1826, he took up his residence at the house of a friend in the neighbourhood. He then proceeds to relate his visit to the town of Bannow, which, he says, is justly denominated the Irish Herculeum.

"As this was in the more immediate vicinity of his house, my kind host accompanied me. We proceeded to the mouth of the harbour, and entered, over a stile, into a large enclosure, having the remains of a dilapidated church in the centre. The ground was a low eminence of sand, partly covered with a scanty vegetation, on which some sheep and goats were feeding. It was every where undulated with hillocks, between which were long straight depressions, having an appearance more formal and regular than is usually seen among sand-hills. Rising from these was a square mass of solid masonry, about seven feet high, which, with the exception of the ruined church walls, was the only appearance of the work of man visible around us. After looking about here for some time, I proposed to my friend to proceed to the town of Bannow, when he astonished me by saying, "You are now in the High-street, in the midst of it." In effect so I was. The sands of the shore had risen, and swallowed it up as effectually as the ashes and lava of Mount Vesuvius could have done. The hillocks were the houses—the straight depressions were the streets—the dilapidated walls, half-covered, were the high parish church—and the square tube of masonry was the massive chimney of the town-house, peeping above the soil, while the rest of the edifice was buried under it.

On more closely inspecting these remains, it was easy to trace the plan of the town, which consisted of several wide streets, crossing one another, and extending generally eighty or a hundred yards before the traces were lost. One of them ran down into the sea at the mouth of the harbour. We followed its traces, and there found what appeared to have been a fine quay at the edge of the water, the remains of which were nearly two hundred yards in length; and higher up was the foundation of a very extensive edifice, evidently some public building. As it was clear that here had existed a large and important town, it was greatly my wish to excavate some part of it, in search of antiquities; and a gentleman of the vicinity, who seemed as zealous as myself, promised to assist me with fifty men. He did not keep his word, however, and I only made such discoveries as were possible by my own personal exertions. I cut across one of the hollow-ways, and ascertained it was paved beneath the soil, and so had been a street. I dug into one of the mounds, and came to the foundations of walls of masonry, and so was convinced they had been houses. I visited the church, and saw it was a very ancient structure. The windows were not the pointed Gothic, such as were subsequently introduced by the Normans; but Saxon, similar to those of Cormac's Chapel, at Cashel, and in that style of architecture known to have existed in Ireland long before the invasion. I examined the inside, and found it filled with sculptured ornaments, as remarkable for their antiquity as their beauty. Among them was a stone coffin, or kistvaen, in the cavity of which was a receptacle for the head and shoulders of the man. Beside it, was a baptismal font of very antique sculpture in relief. In fact, the whole appearance of the place—the impression that we were standing over a once populous city, which yet remained almost entire, with all its busy inhabitants, it might be, buried under our feet, gave to its present silence and solitude an interest greater, perhaps, than is attached to any other remains in the united kingdom.

To inquire into its history, and ascertain what was known of its former state was my next care. It appears to have existed as a place of some note at the time of the invasion, and is mentioned both by native and foreign historians. Among the native historians who mentioned it is Maurice Regan; he calls it Bann. When the Anglo-Normans landed, Regan was secretary to Dermot (Mac

Murrough), and was an actor in, and eye-witness of the events of the invasion. His work is exceedingly valuable as a document, and curious as a composition. It was written originally in Irish, but translated into French verse by some Norman of his acquaintance. His details are graphic, and his heroes make speeches; so that you become acquainted with events and persons, as with those described by Homer. Sir James Ware says, the name, "Bannow," signifies "auspicious;" and it induced the Anglo-Normans to land in its vicinity, as an omen of good success. In the Irish Annals of Innisfallen, it is called, "the Bay of the Pig," from the multitude of these animals reared there by the Irish, a peculiarity for which the neighbouring county is still distinguished, where they are attended with the greatest care, and increase to an enormous size. It was situated at the mouth of a large inlet of the sea, in the barony of Bargie, about twenty-four miles south of Wexford. The bay was formerly entered by two deep channels, as appears by a map in the Down Survey, in the Record Office, Dublin; and, from its favourable situation for trade, attained much prosperity. From the quit-rent rolls which I examined at Wexford, it contained, among others, the following streets: viz. High-street, Weaver-street, St. George-street, Upper-street, St. Toolock's-street, St. Mary's-street, St. Ivory-street, Lady-street, Little-street, &c. Fair slated houses, horse-mills, gardens, and other indications of a prosperous place, are also mentioned as paying quit rent.

It had, moreover, a royal charter of incorporation, and sent two members to the Irish Parliament, who were elected by the burgesses or citizens of the town. This last indication of its prosperity continued up to the time of the Union. My friend, himself, remembered when notice for the election was issued. It was posted on the solitary chimney, as the only representative of the houses of the town. The burgesses were supposed to assemble round it; the members were put into nomination by Lord Ely and so the forms of election were regularly gone through, and, for a series of years, two representatives were returned to Parliament from one chimney.

It is not known at what precise time the submersion of this city by the sands took place; but the process by which it was destroyed is still going on in its vicinity. Before it lies a very extensive tract of fine sand, which is continually shifting and changing its place and form. I watched its progress as it rose in little columns, like the sand-pillars of African deserts on a small scale. It was driven about by the slightest wind in currents and eddies, whenever it met an obstruction it formed round it as a nucleus, and, in the course of a few hours materially altered the appearance of any particular spot. Not only the town, but the whole harbour has undergone an extraordinary mutation from this cause. So late as the period of the Down Survey, in 1657, in the map of this district, which I examined, the island of Slade lay opposite to the site of the town, separated from it by a broad channel, and it appears, from other authorities, that directions were given to mariners how to steer up this channel so as to clear some rocks which lay in the middle of it. There is now no island of Slade, nor navigable channel; the whole was filled up by the process which covered the city. The dangerous rocks are high and dry at a considerable distance inland, and a firm road, over which I passed in a carriage, with several heavy carts, now runs across the harbour.

Puppibus illa prius, patulis nunc hospita plaustri."

The Public are respectfully informed that the DUBLIN PENNY JOURNAL will, after the present Number, pass into the hands of a new Editor and Proprietor, who will carry it on with energy and talent. The Conductors in taking leave of their numerous friends, beg to express their warmest feelings of gratitude, for the kind assistance and cheering approbation they have received during the progress of their efforts to establish a useful and national publication.

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